

**The Honorable Michael M. Reyna
Chairman and CEO
Farm Credit Administration**

**Opening Remarks
FCA Diversity Day – Food For Thought
July 25, 2002**

Welcome and good afternoon to everyone here ... and to all those of you who are joining us via videoconference from our field offices.

I trust you enjoyed this morning's presentations. Our guests spoke on a "wide range" ... indeed a "diverse range" ... of topics, from Elder Care to Gays and Lesbians in the Workplace ... from how to better understand the "mental models" we all have and use when interacting with others ... to the study of genealogy and the importance of tracing our family history.

Clearly, the information provided by our speakers has given all of us a little "Food for Thought."

My sincere thanks and appreciation goes to everyone that has been involved putting this event together. I truly believe this event ranks as one of the most involved and logistically complex events the agency has ever hosted. The very fact that it is happening is a testament to the caring, creativity, dedication, and hard work of lots of FCA employees. Let's give them a round of applause.

The first opportunity I had to speak to FCA employees as a board member was some three years ago. At that time, I spoke of three things that are important to me personally --- a commitment to excellence ... a sense of caring and an appreciation for diversity.

I am very pleased that we are taking this opportunity to celebrate our diversity ... and ... to recognize and acknowledge and embrace it for what it is -- a strength ... not a weakness.

I firmly believe every person can make a contribution; every person can add value. This is certainly true at FCA. We will not truly be successful as an organization unless we utilize and build upon the strengths that every employee has to offer.

That is quite an ongoing challenge ... a challenge for not just managers and supervisors at FCA ... but really ... for all of us. The challenge is to respect not just our similarities ... but our differences too. I believe this is critical to our success at FCA and, in fact, life generally. You need look only as far as the devastation of war to see what happens when basic respect for one another breaks down among individuals and among groups of people.

The fact is that when we value each other for who we are as individuals, we truly begin to understand that ... even though we may have different beliefs ... different opinions ... different backgrounds and many other differences as well ... that we all share a common humanity.

The United States has been called a melting pot ... a more accurate description though maybe “a tossed salad.” Sometimes it is the differences among us that are the most important and valuable aspects of who we are.

Take for example the story of the Navajo Code Talkers. This gallant group used a special code based on the Navajo language to transmit messages during World War II. It was not only a different language the Navajos used, but also the complex complicated tonal qualities of the Navajo language that made it impossible for Japanese troops to decipher the secret messages of the U. S. troops. (1)

The differences that the Navajo Code Talkers brought to their efforts during World War II saved the lives of thousands of U. S. troops and contributed to the success of America’s war efforts. And, while we all are happy about the outcome of the war, my guess is that there are countless servicemen and women that are personally grateful for the differences the Navajos brought to the war effort.

You know ... just like the United States, the federal workforce is a bit of a “tossed salad” too.

Here’s a little more “food for thought” ... a recent report by the Office of Personnel Management on the current Federal Civilian Workforce indicates that we have an average age of 46.3 years, with about 45 percent of the workforce being female and 30.4 percent being minority.

For comparison purposes, FCA’s demographic statistics indicate we have a permanent workforce with an estimated average age of 46.5 years; is 42 percent female and 14 percent minority.

We have a wonderful program ahead of us ... but before I close, I would like to share a quote Will Rogers who said, “We will never truly have a civilized society until we began to respect the differences we each have as individuals.”

Thank you for taking time to celebrate diversity in all of its different forms.

I hope you will join me in the atrium after our keynote speaker to learn more about other cultures through food, art, music, dance and much, much more.

At this time ... I will turn it over to Hal DeCell, Director of FCA’s Office of Congressional and Public Affairs, for an introduction of today’s keynote speaker.

Footnote

(1) www.lapahie.com/NavajoCodeTalker_Right.cfm